

the Phoenix Nest

CROWS BY LIGHTNING

AGAINST the glowering lightning,
 swarms of crows
 Were wheeling, cringing, caw-
 ing things in pain.
 The crashing storm bent down the
 mighty rows
 Of trees, and flattened blowing fields
 of grain.
 And at the dark tumultuous storm's
 white center
 We saw them swerve and veer in
 panicked flight,
 Who realized too late that it was
 winter,
 And beat the swirling, storm-swept
 air in fright.
 And where the pines thrashed fiercely
 down the valley,
 We heard the charging thunder wheel
 and stone
 The cringing crows, which seemed to
 wheel and sally—
 Against that blowing sky we stood,
 alone,
 Too stricken by the thing we saw for
 words,
 And gave our hearts to screaming,
 frightened birds.

E. V. GRIFFITH.

* * *

In March 1932 there came into my possession a copy of the special edition of Eugene O'Neill's trilogy "Mourning Becomes Electra" (of which five hundred copies were for sale). This copy is signed by the author and a facsimile reproduction of his handwritten notes is in a pocket in the back of the book. These working notes and extracts from a fragmentary work diary are also printed on the book's supplementary pages. I saw the plays on the stage.

When, therefore, I was asked to attend a preview showing of the moving picture made from the trilogy, I accepted with alacrity. It is now ten days since the picture has been first publicly shown at the Golden Theatre, but so much was I impressed by it, that perhaps a slight comment here may not be out of order.

Seeing the picture naturally led me to rereading the plays. It is extraordinary how closely the producer-director, Dudley Nichols, has managed to follow the actual text. The Theatre Guild has taken great pride in thus honoring one of its early and enthusiastic competitors in the realm of the imagination, Eugene O'Neill. They tell us, "His early kinship of spirit with the Guild led to a more organic al-

liance, and in 1928 a writing-producing association began which has continued to this day." With the quality of the present picture Mr. O'Neill has expressed himself as "immensely gratified." There is a distinguished cast. Katina Paxinou is Christine Mannon and, as usual, brings great screen talent to her performance. Rosalind Russell, in the role of Lavinia, well conveys the inexorable fibre of the latter's nature, and carries the part with much dignity, though it is no disparagement to say that one still remembers the performance of one of America's greatest actresses, Alice Brady; just as one also recalls the great Nazimova in the mother's role. An extraordinary young English actor, Michael Redgrave, gives a definitive performance of Orin Mannon, with great fluidity of mood and a thoroughly American voice and manner. Raymond Massey is an impressive Ezra Mannon, Henry Hull is excellent as Seth, and Leo Genn as Adam Brant. The supporting players are more than adequate.

"Mourning Becomes Electra," thus transferred into a medium possessing certain advantages over the stage (noticeably in the matter of soliloquies) although naturally losing the living bond between players and audience that is so great an asset in the theatre, is one of the most remarkable moving pictures I have ever seen.

It is interesting to trace in O'Neill's notes the genesis of the trilogy. In the spring of 1926 he was turning over the idea of a modern psychological drama that should use one of "the old legend plots of Greek tragedy." By October of 1928, en route for China through the Arabian Sea, he had fastened upon a modern Electra. He

says, "In Greek story she peters out into undramatic married banality. Such a character contained too much tragic fate within her soul to permit this—why should Furies have let Electra escape unpunished?" Through the notes we follow his first conception of a stylized play with masks. Later he drops the masks and recasts the stylized-soliloquies. In the summer of 1930 he feels deeply discouraged and that perhaps he has attempted more than he can accomplish. By September of that year he has arranged his scheme for revision and the final version, and says that he has learned much from the earlier stylized conception.

His ideas concerning speech-rhythm, pattern, the use of repetition, and the matter of family identification in recurring episodes are worth study. In the end, he comments, "I flatter myself it is a unique thing in drama-turgy—each play complete episode completely realized but at the same time, which is the important point, not complete in that its end begins following play and demands that play as an inevitable sequel—few trilogies in existence in drama of all time and none of them has this quality." Naturally, the moving picture has blended the trilogy into a single comprehensive and absorbing drama, and, due to its own resources, has heightened the effect of the recurring chantey and increased the pictorial background. Occasionally the chantey seems too obtrusive, and the outright language of O'Neill has been softened, in my own opinion, too greatly—as an instance, at the end of the story, in Lavinia's false confession which she makes to repulse Peter Niles for his own good. But these occasions are rare. One is in the presence, throughout, of massive tragedy, and, most certainly, of real greatness of the creative mind.

* * *

ANALYSIS

Vishinsky's fevered tactics seem to me
 Transparent as a hootchy dancer's
 veil:

Instead of logical diplomacy

He drags a red harangue across the
 trail.

DAVID S. STERN.

* * *

In the issue of November 8, I carelessly wrote that the Gerard Manley Hopkins "discoveries" were "a service to American poetry," thereby seeming to imply that Father Hopkins was an American! What I meant was that a service had been done to American poetry in enabling us to read the translations in this country. I apologize for this unintentional deception.

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT.



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DEFINITIONS	WORDS	DEFINITIONS	WORDS
A. Members of a people of southern Belgium.	105 74 12 72 194 132 139 220	N. To assume or claim as one's own unduly, proudly, or presumptuously.	154 107 210 172 145 181 196 113
B. Inhabitant of a state admitted to the Union June 15, 1836.	87 17 5 214 127 108 39 192	O. The Tarheel State, U.S.A.	25 36 89 189 146 122 18 68 55 160 208 29 84
C. Scottish missionary and African explorer (1813-73).	73 159 215 191 124 151 79 1 115 224 92	P. Members of one of the principal divisions of the Finns.	225 138 152 198 71 95 67 49 185
D. Kind of vacuum bottle to keep liquids at an even temperature.	141 58 218 157 56 111 42	Q. Secretary of Labor in the Truman Cabinet.	167 186 222 38 90 100 179 209 125 16 10 82 31
E. Passed, as the time (2 wds.).	30 200 9 153 126 50 171	R. Badly directed as regards order or rule (Comp.).	48 60 63 51 121 96 88 161 223 148 170 182
F. Abode of the dead (Greek mythology, etc.).	110 156 207 66 199	S. Notwithstanding; yet.	116 81 19 53 219 158 142 129 91 34 177 104
G. As a substitute or equivalent.	83 75 211 155 28 70 54	T. Those who, esp. in politics, take advantage of circumstances regardless of principles or results.	8 43 188 97 40 13 201 136 101 118 98 77
H. A reign of anarchy in the French Revolution, 1793-94.	212 52 37 163 135 130	U. Makes flat or even (2 wds.).	11 183 33 117 64 69 143 35 102
I. State admitted to the Union Feb. 6, 1788.	175 106 21 131 187 109 2 45 165 103 147 221 134	V. Plays the bagpipe (Scot. and Eng. Dial.).	140 32 205 41 85 94 57
J. A second mowing from the same soil.	3 195 22 20 44 27 190 178 14	W. Wingless (Zool.).	203 61 168 15 93 78 217
K. Unnecessary.	4 128 162 76 86 216 226 204	X. The study of handwriting, esp. to find aptitudes, characteristics, etc.	47 213 62 80 149 99 202 176 26 65
L. Beats out grain from wheat stalks by various methods.	166 197 23 180 112 169 174 193	Y. Radiant; spreading a flood of resplendent light.	150 7 133 144 206 137 59 46 119
M. Name of ninth and twenty-third Presidents of the U.S.A.	120 123 184 173 164 6 24 114		

DIRECTIONS

To solve this puzzle you must guess twenty-odd words, the definitions of which are given in the column headed DEFINITIONS. The letters in each word to be guessed are numbered. These numbers appear under the dashes in the column headed WORDS. There is a dash for each letter in the required word. The key letters in the squares are for convenience, indicating to which word in the definitions each letter in the diagram belongs. When you have guessed a word, fill it in on the dashes; then write each letter in the correspondingly numbered square of the puzzle diagram. When the squares are all filled in you will find (by reading from left to right) a quotation from a famous author. Read up and down the letters mean nothing. The black squares indicate ends of words; words do not necessarily end at the right side of the diagram.

When the column headed WORDS is filled in, the initial letters spell the name of the author and the title of the piece from which the quotation has been taken. Authority for spelling and definitions is Webster's New International Dictionary (second edition).

[illegible]

Solution of last week's Double-Croctic will be found on page 13 of this issue.